

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0183
Valid 13/06/2024

LAND AT COOKSHILL HALL
ROUGHCOOTE LANE
CAVERSWALL

ERECTION OF SELF BUILD
DWELLING INCLUDING
RESOURCE EFFICIENT
DESIGN

(OUTLINE - MINOR APPS)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the Green Belt
- Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area
- Impact on non-designated heritage asset
- Impact on ecology and biodiversity

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

An open undeveloped square of leafy and unmanicured roadside land with tree and hedge line to its edges. The land is raised above road level and sits behind a stone retaining wall that provides an edge to the central access drive serving an arrangement of barn conversions that provide the historic farmstead to Cookshill Hall, true to its 19th Century origins. The application site provides leafy open land that provides important setting to the historic farmstead and provides separation between this development and the dwellings at the edge of the Cookshill village to the west. The land to the north on the other side of Roughcote Lane is open agricultural field.

PROPOSAL

Outline application for a single dwelling all matters reserved. The application is submitted with an indicative site plan and a statement.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan Development Plan Document (Adopted 2020)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS9 Smaller Village Strategy
SS10 Other Rural Area Strategy
H1 Housing
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 Historic Environment
DC3 Landscape Character
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
NE1 Ecology and Biodiversity

National Planning Policy Framework

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

03/00879/OUT Outline application for residential development. REFUSED.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 12/07/2024

Neighbour consultation period ends: 12/07/2024

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

Two objections received. Following comments made:

- Land is in Green Belt
- No local need for dwelling in rural location
- Development would not be infill open fields opposite
- Site used by wildlife
- Existing dwellings are barn conversions faithful to layout of farmstead
- Loss of privacy at Egerton Rise
- Limited access arrangement
- Disruption during construction
- Additional parking on access road would cause congestion
- Increased noise levels
- Loss of light for dwelling opposite
- They do not own all of the land within the application site required to provide access

Town / Parish Comments

Caverswall PC: Awaited

Environmental Health

No objection. Recommend conditions to protect the amenity of neighbours and to deal with unexpected contamination.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No objection subject to conditions requiring full details of access, layout, parking and visibility.

Waste Collection

No issue

OFFICER COMMENTS

Impact on Green Belt

The site is within the Green Belt where development is inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt unless it is provided for by one of the exceptions that appear in the closed lists in the NPPF.

The list includes an exception for limited infilling in villages; and limited infilling of previously development land providing there is no greater impact on openness of the Green Belt.

The site is considered to be outside of, and beyond, the village of Cookshill to the west. It is to the east of an identifiable edge to the existing village and a point of transition where land becomes increasingly open and existing dwellings sporadically and occasionally spaced along Roughcote Lane. The site is therefore within the intervening countryside between the villages of Cookshill, to the west, and Caverswall, to the south east. Cookshill is identified in the Local Plan at SS9 as a 'smaller village' as defined in the Local Plan's settlement hierarchy at SS2. Smaller villages do not in the adopted 2020 version of the Local Plan have 'development boundaries'. However, in the case of Cookshill, the village did have a development or settlement boundary under the terms of the old 1998 Local Plan, which had the effect of taking the settlement out of the Green Belt, Cookshill therefore, is now surrounded by a Green Belt boundary that provides a *de facto* boundary or edge to the village.

The application site therefore, is outside of a village and development on the site would not be considered as limited infilling in a village; nor, is the land previously developed. Moreover, development of this site would have greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and would conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

The site provides significant openness and separation, visually and spatially, between two semi-detached cottages and the converted barns of a 19th Century farmstead. Development of the site would consolidate built form within the intervening countryside between the villages of Cookshill and Caverswall creating ribbon development from the edge of the village into the Green Belt.

The development would therefore be inappropriate and harmful to the Green Belt. There are no considerations or circumstances that clearly outweigh the substantial weight attributed to that harm. Moreover, the development would not relate well to the existing pattern of development of a smaller village and would instead create ribbon development.

The development would conflict with policy SS9, SS10 and H1 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.

Impact on Character and Appearance and non-designated heritage asset

The development would also be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and the setting, arrangement and layout of an historic farmstead which is true to its 19th C origins and is visually and spatially separate to the denser form of residential development to the west at the edge of the village. In these regards there is also harm to the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, the barns are recorded as 'historic farmstead' on historic record.

The site is open and attractively leafy with tree and hedge line it contributes positively to the quality arrangement and character of the area and the relationship between the

arrangement of barn conversions that stand distinctly within countryside setting and separate from the beginning of the village dwellings to the west.

The site is within an area identified in the Landscape Character and Settlement Assessment for Caverswall and Cookshill as being 'important landscape setting to the settlement' that it provides largely 'open agricultural land providing a physical and visual buffer between Cookshill and Caverswall'. The development of this attractively leafy and open square of land would have a significant adverse impact on the character and the setting of the settlement of Cookshill as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence

In these respects the development would be contrary to policies SS9, SS10, DC1, DC2 and DC3 of the Adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020, the Design Guide 2018 for the area, and the terms of the NPPF.

Impact on ecology and biodiversity

The application is not submitted with an ecology survey, tree survey or biodiversity metric. On casual observation the development must have impacts and result in loss in those regards – there is unmanicured meadow land, stone wall and hedge and tree line. The development is sure to require ground works/excavation and clearance to provide level ground. There is contradiction on the application form – a declaration that the development is to provide an open market dwelling, but then claim that it would be exempt from biodiversity net gain requirements as a custom self-build.

In any event some address of ecology and habitat impact is required. Significant harm to biodiversity is a reason for refusal in its own right (NPPF para 186a). The development would result in impact on, and loss of, biodiversity habitat in those regards. The application does not detail how loss of biodiversity habitat could be mitigated and the development would be harmful in those regards. There would be conflict with policy NE1 of the Adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.

Impact on Amenity

The adjacent semi detached dwelling to the west has a ground floor window in the side elevation, it appears to be a hall or second living room window resulting from a small lean to extension from the side wall. The window is 8 metres from the application site boundary. It is possible to achieve a Space About Dwelling compliant distance from this window to a wall of any proposed dwelling. This neighbour has not objected to the development.

There is a first floor window, appears to serve a bedroom in the end/side gable of the converted barn to the south. The window is just 4m from application boundary, it appears as though the development could be arranged so that the window would overlook driveway or parking rather than garden and that it is possible to achieve a Space About Dwelling compliant distance from this window to a wall of any proposed dwelling.

The front windows of the barn conversion opposite to the east are 12m from the edge of the application site it is possible to achieve compliant separation distances and the

development should not result in unreasonable noise, loss of light or outlook for the neighbour.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

1. The development would be inappropriate and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, and it would not be provided for by any of the exceptions that appear at paragraph 154 of the NPPF. The development would not be limited infilling in a village and would not be limited infilling of previously developed land. The development would have greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and would conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Substantial weight is attributed to the significant harm that would occur to the Green Belt and there are no other considerations that would amount to 'very special circumstances' and clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other harms that would result from the Green Belt. Moreover, the development would not relate well to the existing pattern of development of a smaller village and would instead create ribbon development. The development would conflict with policy SS9, SS10 and H1 of the SMDC Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.

2. The development would be harmful to the positive quality contribution that the open undeveloped site currently makes to the character and appearance of the area and the setting, arrangement and layout of an historic farmstead which is true to its 19th Century origins and is visually and spatially separate to the denser form of residential development to the west at the edge of the village of Cookshill. This would fail to reinforce local distinctiveness and be harmful to the character and appearance of the area with some harm to the significance of a non designated heritage asset. The development would have a significant adverse impact on the character and the setting of the settlement of Cookshill as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character evidence. In these respects the development would be contrary to policies SS9, SS10, DC1, DC2 and DC3 of the Adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020, the Design Guide 2018 for the area, and the terms of the NPPF.

3. The application has not been provided with an ecology survey, a tree survey or biodiversity impact assessment or metric. The land has unmanicured meadow land, loose and overgrown stone wall, and hedge and tree line. The development would result in impact on, and loss of, biodiversity habitat in those regards. The application does not detail how loss of biodiversity habitat could be mitigated and the development would be harmful in those regards. There would be conflict with policy NE1 of the Adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2020 and the terms of the NPPF.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Ben Hurst

Recommendation Date: 8th August 2024

X *B.S. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council